## IN THE CLAIMS

This listing replaces all prior versions of the claims.

Please cancel claims 1-64.

65. (currently amended) A process for thermally crystallizing solid polyester polymer pellets in a pipe comprising directing a flow of solid pellets in a liquid medium continuously through a pipe having an aspect ratio L/D of at least 15:1, wherein the solid pellets are crystallized in the pipe at a liquid medium temperature greater than the $T_g$ of the polyester polymer.

66. (original) The process of claim 65, wherein the pellets are crystallized in said pipe at a liquid medium temperature exceeding the boiling point of the liquid medium at 1 atmosphere.

67. (original) The process of claim 65, wherein the pellets are crystallized in said pipe at a liquid medium temperature of at least 140°C.

68. (original) The process of claim 65, wherein the pellets and liquid medium in said pipe are under a pressure equal to or greater than the vapor pressure of the liquid medium.

69. (previously presented) The process of claim 65, comprising introducing said polyester pellets having a degree of crystallinity of no more than 15% into said pipe.

70. (previously presented) The process of claim 69, comprising introducing said solid pellets having a degree of crystallinity of no more than 10% into said pipe.

71. (original) The process of claim 65, wherein the pipe has an aspect ratio L/D of at least 25:1, the pellets are crystallized in said pipe at a liquid medium temperature of at least 140°C, the pellets and liquid medium in said pipe are under a pressure equal to or greater than the vapor pressure of the liquid medium, and the pellets .

72. (previously presented) The process of claim 71, comprising introducing said solid pellets having a degree of crystallinity of no more than 15% into said pipe.

73. (original) The process of claim 72, comprising crystallizing said solid pellets in said pipe to a degree of crystallinity of at least 30%.

74. (previously presented) The process of claim 65, comprising introducing said solid polyester pellets having a degree of crystallinity of 15% or less into said pipe and crystallizing said pellets to a degree of crystallinity of at least 30% in said pipe in 10 minutes or less.

75. (original) The process of claim 74, comprising conducing said crystallization in 4 minutes or less.

76. (original) The process of claim 65, wherein the pipe is devoid of mechanically rotating paddles, in-line mixers, weirs, or baffles.

77. (original) The process of claim 65, wherein the flow of the liquid medium is in the same direction as the flow of the pellets.

78. (new) The process of claim 65, comprising continuously separating the pellets and the liquid medium from each other.

79. (new) The process of claim 78, wherein said liquid medium comprises water.

80. (new) The process of claim 65, wherein said polyester polymer comprises polyethylene terephthlate.

81. (new) The process of 80, wherein said polyethylene terephthlate comprises at least 90 ml % of terephthlate units, based on the mole percentage of diacid components.

82. (new) The process of claim 65, comprising conducting said crystallization in four minutes or less to obtain a degree of crystallization of at least 25% at a liquid medium temperature ranging from 140° C to 180° C.

83. (new) The process of claim 82, further comprising continuously separating the pellets and the liquid medium from each other.

84. (new) The process of claim 83, wherein said liquid medium comprises water.

85. (new) The process of claim 65, further comprising a pelletizer in communication with said pipe, wherein the liquid medium circulates with a current directing the solid pellets away from said pelletizer and directly or indirectly into said pipe.